

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 162

June 19, 1996, 4:09 p.m.
Page S-6459 Temp. Record

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION/Kinetic Energy ASAT Program

SUBJECT: National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1997 . . . S. 1745. Thurmond motion to table the Bingaman modified amendment No. 4058.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 52-46

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1745, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1997, will authorize a total of \$267.3 billion in budget authority for national defense programs (the President requested \$254.3 billion). In real terms, this bill will authorize \$5.6 billion less, and the President requested \$18.6 billion less, than was provided in fiscal year (FY) 1996.

The Bingaman amendment would strike the provisions to provide funding for the Kinetic Energy Anti-Satellite (KE-ASAT) Program, and would substitute in lieu thereof a requirement for the Space Architect to consider whether the KE-ASAT should be a specific element of the U.S. space control architecture, and a requirement for the Secretary of Defense to prepare a report by March 31, 1997, with his recommendations for the space control architecture that should be pursued. If either the Space Control Architect or the Secretary of Defense then recommended against funding for the KE-ASAT program, remaining FY 1996 funds for that program could be spent on other programs. (The term "space control architecture" refers to defense systems that destroy or block the transmissions of imaging satellites, which can be used for military reconnaissance. Thirty countries have imaging satellites. Many of those countries sell satellite data to other countries. The KE-ASAT Program has been funded since 1985. To date, \$245 million has been spent; for \$75 million in each of the next 2 years the system could be deployed. It has already been fully tested. All other anti-satellite programs, such as laser programs, are many years away from any possible deployment. Clinton Administration officials have tried to stop funding for the KE-ASAT; this amendment would leave it up to those officials as to whether the KE-ASAT would receive funding.)

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. Following debate, Senator Thurmond moved to table the Bingaman amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

(See other side)

YEAS (52)			NAYS (46)			NOT VOTING (2)	
Republicans (51 or 96%)	Democrats (1 or 2%)		Republicans (2 or 4%)	Democrats (44 or 98%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (2)
Abraham	Helms	Heflin	Hatfield	Akaka	Johnston		Bumpers- ^{2AN}
Ashcroft	Hutchison		Jeffords	Baucus	Kennedy		Rockefeller- ²
Bennett	Inhofe			Biden	Kerrey		
Bond	Kassebaum			Bingaman	Kerry		
Brown	Kempthorne			Boxer	Kohl		
Burns	Kyl			Bradley	Lautenberg		
Campbell	Lott			Breaux	Leahy		
Chafee	Lugar			Bryan	Levin		
Coats	Mack			Byrd	Lieberman		
Cochran	McCain			Conrad	Mikulski		
Cohen	McConnell			Daschle	Moseley-Braun		
Coverdell	Murkowski			Dodd	Moynihan		
Craig	Nickles			Dorgan	Murray		
D'Amato	Pressler			Exon	Nunn		
DeWine	Roth			Feingold	Pell		
Domenici	Santorum			Feinstein	Pryor		
Faircloth	Shelby			Ford	Reid		
Frahm	Simpson			Glenn	Robb		
Frist	Smith			Graham	Sarbanes		
Gorton	Snowe			Harkin	Simon		
Gramm	Specter			Hollings	Wellstone		
Grams	Stevens			Inouye	Wyden		
Grassley	Thomas						
Gregg	Thompson						
Hatch	Thurmond						
	Warner						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

The Bingaman amendment would let the Clinton Administration decide if funding should continue for the KE-ASAT Program. For the past 3 years we have had to fight this Administration to make it obey the law by spending the money we have appropriated for this program. Given this fact, does anyone doubt what the decision would be if the Bingaman amendment were to pass? No one is fooled by the pretense of having the Space Architect and the Secretary of Defense study the issue; this amendment is designed to kill the KE-ASAT Program.

Killing the KE-ASAT Program would seriously harm the national security interests of the United States. During the Persian Gulf War, the Iraqi Air Force was destroyed or forced out of the air in the first few days of fighting. Iraq did not have imaging satellites, so once its air force was neutralized it was left with no reconnaissance capability. This lack of Iraqi overhead surveillance made it possible for the allies to mass their forces and sweep across the desert to bring a swift conclusion to a war that could have cost tens of thousands of American lives. General Charles Horner, Desert Storm air commander, said that the diplomacy that we used convinced France and Russia not to sell satellite reconnaissance data to Iraq (France and Russia are not the only countries with imaging satellites; such satellites are commercially available and 30 countries already have them). If that diplomacy had failed, the United States would have had no way of stopping France or Russia from selling satellite data on the allies' troop movements.

We still do not have any anti-satellite capabilities, but within 2 years we can if funding for the KE-ASAT Program is continued. The KE-ASAT is a completely tested system that we know can work and that we know can be operational in 2 years. The United States has spent \$245 million on developing this defensive system since 1985; if \$75 million is spent this year, and if \$75 million more is spent next year, we can have it in place. No other proposed system can be put in place in the near-term. Our colleagues can talk about hypothetical systems that might or might not work and that might or might not be cheaper and that definitely will not be operational, if ever, until the distant future, but in the mean time the United States will have no anti-satellite capabilities.

Our colleagues' main objections to the KE-ASAT are that it will create thousands of pieces of "space junk" when it destroys a satellite and that the country that owns any satellite that is destroyed will get mad at the United States. Our colleagues need to get their priorities straight. Even if the KE-ASAT did blow a satellite into thousands of pieces (which it would not; it would only disable it), it is of much greater urgency to protect the lives of thousands of American soldiers than it is to worry about litter in space. Similarly, we are more than willing to take diplomatic objections from a country whose satellite we destroy if that satellite is being used to sell information on our troop movements to our enemies.

Eventually, it is true, some other system may be developed that is superior, and we strongly support research to find such a system. Until such time as a better means of stopping satellite reconnaissance is feasible and can be deployed, however, it would be a huge mistake to leave the United States defenseless against imaging satellites. We therefore strongly urge our colleagues to join us in tabling this amendment.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

Imaging satellites pose a very real military threat to the United States, and the United States should develop the means to counter that threat. The Defense Department is currently studying the various options that have been proposed. Instead of waiting for the expert results of that study, our colleagues have put a provision in this bill that will require the Defense Department to choose one particular option, the KE-ASAT Program. In our opinion, our colleagues have made the worst possible choice. The KE-ASAT, unlike the other options under consideration, will blow a satellite apart. The result will be hundreds of pieces of space debris that will pose a threat to other satellites. If a satellite's signal were instead jammed using a microwave or laser anti-satellite system, no debris would be created, and in fact the satellite might not even be damaged. A system that would not damage a satellite would be preferable to a system that would permanently disable one because it might someday be necessary to stop a nominal ally or a neutral nation from selling satellite data to an enemy. Destroying such a country's satellite would harm U.S. relations with it. Yet another problem with the KE-ASAT is that it is more expensive than the other options under consideration. Nevertheless, the Bingaman amendment would not eliminate the authorization for the KE-ASAT Program. Instead, it would direct both the Space Architect and the Secretary of Defense to decide if it should be funded. We know that many Senators favor this program, and other Senators oppose it, so as a compromise we have offered this amendment to let the experts decide. We urge our colleagues to support this compromise solution.